

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to determine the reliability for the EPT through a test-retest method. This chapter describes the sample used in this study, the instrument involved (the EPT) and the use of statistical analysis to determine the reliability of the EPT.

SAMPLE

A sample of 61 students, who had registered for the Fast Track Bachelor of Business Administration (B. B. A.) programme for the December 1998 intake, was used in the testing for reliability of the EPT Forms I and II. These students were placed into three different classes as a result of this placement test for their English Language classes. The background details of this sample is in Appendix K. They had completed their SPM and are between the ages of 18 to 23. The following table shows the details of their age and gender.

Table 1. Cross tabulation of age and gender of sample

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Age	18	4	4	8
	19	12	4	16
	20	13	2	15
	21	14	4	18
	22	1	1	2
	23	1	1	2
Total		45	16	61

The entry requirement for the B. B. A. programme is a minimum of P8 in the SPM English. Some of these students may have continued their studies after SPM elsewhere and have opted to join the B. B. A. programme here. Others did not take any English courses after SPM. The following are summaries of their English qualification.

Table 2. Sample's SPM results

	Frequency	Percent
A1	2	3.3
A2	2	3.3
C3	8	13.1
C4	13	21.3
C5	12	19.7
C6	7	11.5
P7	12	19.7
P8	5	8.2
Total	61	100.0

The mode for the SPM results in Table 2 is at C4 . This shows that the sample's achievement level in English for SPM is average.

Table 3. Sample's other English results

Courses	Results	Frequency	Percent
1119	C3	1	1.6
GNVQ	B	3	4.9
	C	9	14.8
	D	5	8.2
Pre IPM	C3	1	1.6
	C5	1	1.6
	C6	1	1.6
UNITEK	B	2	3.3
	C	3	4.9
No other English courses		35	57.4
Total		61	100.0

Note: 1119 – 1119 English
GNVQ – GNVQ Certificate in English
Pre IPM – Academic English at IPM
UNITEK – Academic English at UNITEK

Table 3 show the number of students who took the various English course and who did not take any English courses after SPM. It was noted that their extra qualification did not have any bearing to their performance in the EPT.

Although there are 35 students who did not take any other English courses after SPM, they are all not fresh from school. The details of those who are not fresh from school is not available. It is uncertain whether these students have worked before or studied elsewhere but are withholding their other English qualifications besides the SPM English. Therefore, conclusion about their exposure to the English Language after SPM can not be made. The following table shows these students according to their age, in which those who are 18 years old are regarded as fresh from school, and have no formal exposure to the English Language after SPM.

Table 4. Cross tabulation of students without any English courses after SPM with age

		No extra English courses
Age	18	8
	19	7
	20	10
	21	7
	22	2
	23	1
Total		35

For testing of validity, the results of 73 students from the 1997's batch of students in the Pre-Science programme was taken. This sample sat for the EPT Form I upon admission, went through the English Language course at the Pre-Science programme conducted at the Australian Matriculation Centre at PPP, and finally were given a 2 hour English test at the end of the semester, which is set by the coordinator from the ITM Language Centre. Their background is also similar to the B. B. A. students, aged between 18 – 20, with a minimum of P8 in their SPM English. Details of the distribution of age is not available. It is assumed that these students had no formal exposure to the English Language after SPM. However, their SPM English results is as follows:

Table 5. SPM English results of validity sample

	SPM English	
	Count	%
A1	2	2.7
A2	3	4.1
C3	20	27.4
C4	4	5.5
C5	23	31.5
C6	5	6.8
P7	16	21.9
Total	73	100.0

INSTRUMENT

The first test (Appendix A) that was conducted was the existing EPT Form I. This test has been adapted from the CELT – Form A, which is widely used as a placement test in higher learning institutions around the world. The team of teachers teaching at the PPP Training Centre set this EPT Form I according to the needs of the programme, which includes the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. In developing EPT Form I, relevant sections from the CELT were selected.

For the retest, a parallel test (Appendix B) was set by the researcher. Some of the items were adapted from the CELT – Form A and TOEFL (1986). However, 30% of the questions were repeated from the first test (Form I) for all sections of the test except for Section D. This is because there were only 2 questions for Section D and 1 question was new and the other was the same as in Form I.

Both tests have same number of parts and questions. All sections except Section D have comprehensive examples of question and its respective answer. General instructions are spelled out at the beginning of the test booklet, which is read out in the

listening cassette. All specific instructions precede the questions at every part of the section.

The EPT is divided into 4 sections: Section A – Listening, Section B – Structure, Section C – Vocabulary and Section D – Writing.

SECTION A : LISTENING

This section is divided into 3 parts: Answering Questions, Understanding Statements and Comprehending Dialogues.

Part 1 - Answering Questions (20 questions)

A question is asked and students are required to select the most logical answer to the question.

Part 2 - Understanding Statements (20 questions)

Students will hear a statement and are required to paraphrase the statement.

Part 3 - Comprehending Dialogues (10 questions)

There will be a short conversation between two people and a third voice will ask a question pertaining to the content of the dialogue.

The entire section is recorded on audio cassette. All instructions and questions are recorded on this cassette. The items in this section are multiple choice type with 4 options. The options are not recorded, but printed on the question booklet. Therefore, having heard the question on tape, students are required to read the options in the question booklet during a short pause on the tape and circle the letter that corresponds to the correct answer on the answer booklet. The total time allotted for this section is 30 minutes.

For the parallel test, 30% of the questions from Form I was retained and 70% were new questions. Part 1 has 14 new questions, adapted from CELT, Form A and 6

questions from EPT Form I. Part 2 has 14 new questions, adapted from TOEFL, 1986 and 6 questions from EPT Form I. Part 3 has 7 new questions adapted from TOEFL, 1986 and 3 questions from EPT Form I.

SECTION B : STRUCTURE

There are 3 parts in this section: Sentence Completion, Paragraph Completion and Question Forms.

Part 1 - Sentence Completion (10 questions)
Students are required to select the most suitable structure for the sentence given.

Part 2 - Paragraph Completion (35 questions)
This part involves 2 cloze tests.

Part 3 - Question Forms (5 questions)
Students are required to choose the most suitable question tag for this part.

The type of items in this section is also multiple choice but with only 3 options for every question. Total time allowed is 25 minutes.

The EPT Form II was adapted from EPT Form I with Part 1 retaining 3 questions from Form I and 7 new questions. Part 2 has retained the first cloze test but the second one was adapted from a passage from the English Comprehension Exercises for Syllabus 121 (1979). The ratio of questions of Form I to new questions was still at 3:7. Part 3 has 2 questions from Form I and 3 new questions. In this case, the 3:7 ratio was not met.

SECTION C : VOCABULARY

There are two parts in this section: Statements and Phrases.

Part 1 - Statements (25 questions)

This part involves completion of statements with the most appropriate word.

Part 2 – Phrases (25 questions)

Students are required to choose an answer closest to the meaning of the phrase given.

These questions are multiple choice type with 4 options. The time limit for this section is 25 minutes.

The parallel test was developed with Part 1 having 8 questions from EPT Form I, 10 questions adapted from CELT, Form A and 7 new questions. Part 2 has 7 questions from EPT Form I, 15 questions adapted from CELT, Form A, and 3 new questions.

SECTION D : WRITING

Students have to answer both questions in this section. Both questions are essay type. Students are asked to write about approximately 120 words for each question in Form B, in the respective pages.

The first question involves description of two pie charts. The time suggested for this question is 15 minutes. Whereas, the second question is a narration. The time allocated for this question is about 20 minutes.

The EPT Form II retained Task 2 of Form I and a new question was developed for Task 1. However, the question was similar in nature (description of 2 pie charts) except a change in content.

This study was carried out in various stages. Firstly, the administration of the two parallel tests – Form I and Form II. Upon completion of this, the marking the scripts was in progress. Then, the scores were coded for computation. Finally the results of the computation was analysed.

ADMINISTRATION OF TEST

The materials used in the administration of the both tests were an audio cassette player, 65 question booklets of the EPT, Form I, 65 answer booklets of Form A and Form B, a whiteboard marker and a clock for each session of testing.

On the third day after registration, Wednesday, December 9, 1998, the students sat for this placement test. The test was administered in one lecture room (a maximum capacity of 80) and the cassette player was audible to all students as the speakers are placed in strategic positions. Three invigilators invigilated this test, including the researcher. The task of the invigilator includes writing specific information on the whiteboard, making announcements and ensuring that students are answering the correct sections of the test within the allowed time. On the whiteboard, the instructions should be written out as in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Instructions on the Board

<u>Placement Test</u>
Section A – 30 mins
Section B – 25 mins*
Section C – 25 mins**
Section D: Task 1 – 15 mins
Task 2 – 20 mins
(Stop at ***)

Before the students were allowed into the room, the invigilators distributed on 61 tables: a question booklet, a copy of Form A and Form B and a copy of the Writing Tasks. A technician was on duty to ensure that the cassette player has been fixed properly and was tested for audibility. Only then students were allowed into the room. They were only allowed to bring in their stationery.

The chief invigilator informed the students that the test was about to begin before playing the cassette, which was wound to the beginning of Side A. The test began with the general instructions for the entire placement test, and followed by specific instructions for Section A, Part 1, which is the beginning of the Listening Section. At the end of Part 3 of Section A, the invigilator stopped the cassette and announced that they had 25 minutes to complete Section B and told them the time they ought to stop. The invigilator then wrote the time on the board at the place marked * as seen in Figure 1. When the time was up, the invigilator asked the students to stop writing and to turn the page over and begin Section C. She then told them that they had 25 minutes to complete Section C and wrote the time on the board at the place marked ** as in Figure 1. Upon completion of Section C, the invigilators collected all the question and answer booklets (Form A), making sure they had written their names on the front covers of the answer booklets. The invigilators counted the number of question and answer booklets to make sure it tallied with the number of students present.

Subsequently, she announced that Section D would begin and that they had 15 minutes for Task 1 and 20 minutes for Task 2. The time when the students had to stop was written on the board (marked *** in Figure 1) after announcing it to the students. At

this point, students can choose to answer Task 2 first before going on to Task 1, so long they were aware that the total time limit for this section was 35 minutes. At the end of the 35 minutes, all question and answer booklets were collected and counted. Then, students were dismissed.

The scripts were marked by Saturday, December 12, 1998 to put the students into their homogeneous groups so that they could start classes on the following Monday.

The EPT Form II was given to students about a week after the first test (Form I). The students were streamed into their classes by then and it was difficult to get them together for the administration of EPT Form II. So the test was conducted in 3 different venues at 3 different times within 2 days. The first class had their test on the afternoon of Thursday, December 17, 1998 and the other two classes had theirs on Friday, December 18, 1998. As this test was conducted in classrooms, the researcher played the role of the invigilator. Once the tests were completed, scripts were marked.

The marking of the scripts was done in 2 parts. The first is the marking of the objective sections, A B and C. A template is cut up and is placed on an answer booklet. All correct answers were ticked. Then the template was removed and the ticked marks were counted. Scores were written for every part of each section on the side margins and a total for the section on top of the page of the answer booklet.

The second part is the rating of essay questions. The holistic approach was utilised with a 10 mark band and its criteria as stated in Appendix E. There were two raters for this Section. Each one marked a set of essays and exchanged the papers and marked the other set of papers. These scores were tabulated and there were no

discrepancies as the difference was only a maximum of 2 marks for 5 of the scripts of the first test (Form I) and 6 scripts of the second test (Form II). Therefore no third rater was required. All the raters involved are experienced teachers who have been involved in teaching writing courses. This method is used to ensure there is no bias in the rating of essays.

As additional information, observations were also made by the researcher about the way the sample reacted and answered the questions while the tests were being administered.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data obtained from the test were then analysed. The scores for both the tests were keyed into the Excel programme and a print-out was obtained (Appendixes I and J). These scores were then coded and keyed into the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) 7.5.1 for Windows programme. A Bivariate Correlations procedure was run to answer the first set of questions in the Research Questions (Chapter 1). This procedure computes the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.

To answer the second set of questions of the Research Questions, the Reliability Analysis was utilised. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was obtained to determine the internal consistency of each test.

To ensure the predictive validity of EPT Form I, the composite scores for the EPT Form I and the ITM Final English examination were converted to percentage respectively (as seen in Appendix L). The data was then analysed through the Bivariate Correlations procedure.